

# Stay alert to indicators of weapons of mass destruction

Would you be able to recognize potential indicators of threats involving weapons of mass destruction? Do you know the correct emergency actions to take?

Weapons of mass destruction employ chemical, biological and radiological material that can be dispersed in the air we breathe or the water we drink, or on surfaces we physically contact. The following general information does not cover all possible indications of a threatened use of weapons of mass destruction.

Dispersion methods could include placing an open container in a heavily used area; using conventional home, garden or commercial spray devices; or detonating an improvised explosive device to disseminate chemical, biological or radiological material.

When chemical agents are used, medical symptoms appear rapidly, within minutes to hours, and the evidence or signature of the material can be observed in colored residue, dead foliage, pungent odor, and dead insects and animals. But when biological or radiological agents are used, the onset of symptoms may take days to weeks and there are typically few characteristic signatures.

**You can help law enforcement and emergency responders in evaluating potential threats by staying alert and watching for the following indicators:**

- Unusual packages or containers, especially those found in unlikely or sensitive locations, such as near heating, ventilation or air-conditioning units or air-intake systems.
- Unusual powders or liquids, droplets, mists or clouds, especially those found near heating, ventilation or air-conditioning units or air-intake systems.
- Signs of tampering with equipment such as locked heating, ventilation or air-conditioning units or air-intake systems, or tampering in targeted areas such as stocks of food or water supplies.
- Reports of suspicious person(s) or activities, especially those involving sensitive locations within or around a building.
- Surveillance of targeted areas, including hotels, entertainment venues, aircraft, water sources, office buildings or apartment buildings.
- Theft of chemical products and equipment.
- Unexplained or unusual odors that may range from fruity and flowery to sharp and pungent, garlic or horseradish-like, bitter almonds, peach kernels and new-mown grass or hay.
- Unusual or unscheduled spraying or discovery of spray devices or bottles.

*Continued on page 10.*

## Stay alert to indicators of weapons of mass destruction, cont.

### Be on the lookout for potential indicators of weapons of mass destruction:

- Maintain a heightened sense of awareness.
- Put more emphasis on the security of your immediate surroundings.
- Do periodic inspections of building facilities and heating, ventilation or airconditioning units or air-intake systems for irregularities.
- Review emergency operations and evacuation plans and procedures for all locations and organizations to ensure that plans are up to date.
- Promptly report suspicious activities to appropriate law-enforcement authorities.

### Here are some emergency procedures to follow when a potential threat has been identified and confirmed:

- Maintain a safe distance or evacuate the area. If you are outside, move to an upwind location; if you are inside, keep outside doors and windows closed.
- Call the Patrol Operations Center at 373-3800 or the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory single-point-of-contact number, 375-2400, after reaching a safe area.
- Do not handle or disturb suspicious objects.
- Remove possibly contaminated external clothing (including hats, shoes and gloves).
- Follow emergency operations plans and instructions from emergency-response personnel. ■